



The Old Ironsides Report

21 July 2003

Paratrooper cooks make soldiers' days a little better

Story by Sgt. Brent M. Williams
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BAGHDAD, Iraq — Hot chow, in the field, on the line, on the road and in lands far from home, makes every soldier's day a little better.

"There's an old saying," said Staff Sgt. Ronald Williams, senior food operations noncommissioned officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, "The Army moves by the stomach."

From the brigade to the company, down to the soldier level, good, quality Army food is the driving force for any long-term operation and a big source of high morale, explained Williams.

Williams supervises the day-to-day operations of a three-man crew responsible for putting out the two hot meals a day for the brigade's command staff and the headquarters soldiers in his company.

The work is straightforward and not very difficult, said Pfc. Eric Johns, food service specialist, HHC, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment. The biggest challenge facing the paratroopers, presents itself in the long hours that are required to feed more than 250 soldiers on any given day.

"Everything we could possibly do is done the night before," Johns said. "One of us works the grill; the other handles everything else. We work for what's more efficient. Time is of the importance."

The day begins at 4 a.m. for the dining facility soldiers, who more often than not work somewhere between a 16 to 17-hour day, seven days a week.

The morning's B Rations -- powdered eggs and potatoes, beef chipped or sausage gravy, hot coffee, cereal, juice and milk -- are ready to serve by 7 a.m. The dishes are ready to start by 9 a.m.

The shift leader departs for the brigade support area and picks up food and water for the next day's meal. He returns, and his soldiers unload the trucks, all the while working in the Iraqi sun.

Now it is noon and time for a break. A mixture of ready-to-heat tray pack meals, called T Rations, or fresh from the refrigerator, A Rations, beef, steak, or chicken, dinner is set and ready to be prepped by 2 p.m., and the last meal of the day begins at 5 p.m.

By the time the cooks have finished preparing the next day's breakfast, the sun has gone down. The stars have come up, and the soldiers are ready to pull guard duty; get some rack, and do it all over again.

"It is a challenge," Williams said, "and the pressure to make a perfect meal is high."

Williams, who plans to open his own Philly Steak sandwich shop in Fayetteville, N.C., says that to date his soldiers have performed superbly.

"It is important to us that we get to provide that service, that outstanding service," he said. "I am trying to give them rest, implementing good rest plans, counseling them verbally on what to do to make things more efficient and sometimes, stepping back and letting them do things to the best of their ability. Overall, they have done a great job--excellent soldiers . . . professionals."

The brigade's DFAC works to stay motivated, takes initiative to get the job done and is handling the stress of living in a combat zone well, said Fennell.

The food service specialists, who arrived in Kuwait March 19, joined the 2nd Brigade Combat Team upon the completion of combat operations in As Samawah. The cooks pulling guard shifts, manning guns, and serving in brigade combat operations as needed, were responsible for issuing Meals -Ready-to-Eat and water to their company of paratroopers, working city to city, moving north towards Baghdad.

The work to serve their soldiers hot Army chow in Iraq began upon arriving in Diwaniyah in early April and promises to continue until the mission is complete, said Johns.

"We serve in a little way," said Andrew H. Chang, food service specialist, HHC, 325 AIR, "just to make things a little easier for the soldiers away from their homes. Just to see them smile, to know they enjoy the food, it makes things a little better."



Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz talks with soldiers from 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division during breakfast at the unit's headquarters Sunday . Wolfowitz visited with the soldiers of the Bulldog Brigade as part of his visit to Iraq. He thanked soldiers for "their success and their sacrifice" during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Photo by Spc. Shauna McRoberts, 1 AD PAO.

NEWS

Senator Prods Bush on Prewar Iraq Claims

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Bush could make the controversy over the now-infamous 16 words of his State of the Union address go away by telling Americans whether the speech's justification for war was exaggerated, the vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee said Sunday. "It's just a question of was it right, or was it wrong?" Sen. Jay Rockefeller said.

Blair Won't Resign Over Adviser's Suicide

LONDON (AP) - Prime Minister Tony Blair said he would take full responsibility if an inquiry finds the government contributed to the suicide of scientist David Kelly - identified Sunday by the British Broadcasting Corp. as its main source in accusing the government of hyping weapons evidence to justify war in Iraq. Blair, dogged on his trip through east Asia by angry charges about the Ministry of Defense adviser's death, said he has no intention of resigning over the dispute, as some critics at home have demanded.

Experts: 2nd N. Korea Nuke Site Possible

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) - North Korea would find it hard to secretly build another plutonium production plant, a key step toward making nuclear weapons.

Yet they did not rule it out following a report that the North may be operating a second facility, possibly buried deep in the mountains. If true, the suspicions that North Korea has built a second plant for producing weapons-grade plutonium could complicate diplomatic efforts to seek the verifiable dismantling of Pyongyang's nuclear facilities. It also poses a dilemma for President Bush if diplomacy fails and he is forced to consider military action.

Chaplain's thought for the day:

Racing Around like a Chicken with Your Head Cut Off?

Meanwhile, Boaz went up to the town gate and sat there.

(NIV) Ruth 4:4

The town gate was the place in town where many legal transactions took place. Boaz wanted approval from the elders to marry Ruth, but he first had to clear any prior claims to her estate. Instead of running around, making things happen, Boaz went to the gate, sat and waited until the people he needed to speak with came by the gate. Boaz was secure in his purpose and knew he was in God's will so he trusted plans to unfold.

Are you rushing around trying to make things happen or are you waiting On God to lead the way? Relax, regroup, and let God lead the way.

SPORTS

PGA Rookie Ben Curtis Wins British Open

SANDWICH, England (AP) - A wacky week at the British Open held one final surprise, and it was the biggest of them all: Ben Curtis holding the claret jug.

An unknown PGA Tour rookie in his first major championship, Curtis outlasted Tiger Woods and a collection of All-Stars for perhaps the most stunning conclusion to a Grand Slam event in 90 years.

Orioles Top Angels 7-6 on Grand Slam

BALTIMORE (AP) -- David Segui's seventh career grand slam backed a fine pitching performance by Jason Johnson, and the Baltimore Orioles beat Anaheim 7-6 Sunday to complete their first four-game sweep of the Angels since 1965.

Luis Matos had a career-high four hits and Brook Fordyce went 3-for-4 for the Orioles, who finished 8-1 this season against the defending World Series champions.

Johnson (8-4) allowed one run and six hits in 7 1-3 innings, striking out five and walking two.

D-Rays Crush Rangers 15-4, Match Record

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) - Aubrey Huff, Al Martin and Travis Lee each hit a three-run homer, leading the Tampa Bay Devil Rays to a 15-4 rout of the Texas Rangers on Sunday. The 15 runs equaled a team record and was the most ever at home for Tampa Bay, which is 8-8 in July. The Devil Rays were a franchise-worst 5-21 in June.

Protester Disrupts British Grand Prix

SILVERSTONE, England (AP) - An unidentified man wandered onto the track at the British Grand Prix on Sunday, disrupting the race and forcing drivers to swerve around him. The man, wearing a kilt, was holding a sign and had placards attached to his body.

He wandered onto the track during the 12th lap, and was walking toward a high-speed corner as six drivers sped past. The man was on the track for about 20 seconds before being tackled by a race steward and dragged away.

In other news...

'Bad Boys II' Takes Custody of Box Office

LOS ANGELES (AP) - Bad boys old and new ruled the box office. The buddy-cop flick "Bad Boys II" debuted at No. 1 with \$46.7 million, trailed by last weekend's top film, the buccaneer adventure "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl," with \$33.3 million, according to studio estimates Sunday.

TODAY'S WEATHER

High: 109F

Low: 86F

